PACIFIC FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (PFSD) & CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP FOR PACIFIC SIDS

Remarks by the Dame Meg Taylor, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum

14 December 2020

[Due to technical connectivity issues, the Secretary General was unable to deliver her remarks during the opening session, but has kindly agreed that the statement be made available to meeting delegates]

• Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic Corp
• Representatives of regional and international development agencies,
• Ladies and gentlemen.
• Greetings to you all.

• Thank you for the opportunity to address you all at this Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development & Capacity Building Workshop.

• Delivering coherent, coordinated and targeted development support to Pacific Countries starts with our ability to come together to discuss, collaborate and to formulate partnerships on discussion platforms such as this Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and workshop.
Localising the SDGs

• Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the Pacific has shown serious commitment to its sustainable development pathway starting with the endorsement of the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development in 2017 by our Pacific Leaders and then the development of the first Quadrennial Pacific Regional Sustainable Development Report in 2018.

• A regional set of targets and indicators have been used to account for national priorities and to monitor the region’s progress against the 2030 agenda and SDGs, the SAMOA Pathway, Framework for Pacific Regionalism and other critical global and regional sustainable development commitments, including the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration.

• We have from the region the 2020 Biennial Pacific Sustainable Report which builds on the findings of the 2018 First Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report. The report was produced under the guidance of the Pacific Sustainable Development Steering Committee chaired by Tuvalu with representatives from our three-member groupings Polynesia, Melanesia, Micronesia; our CROP agencies, Donor partners, the United Nations, the Private Sector, and Civil Society. This report
is a reflection of inclusive policy development in the Pacific. Some of you here today, have provided guidance to this document, and I thank you for your assistance.

**The 2020 Biennial Report and COVID-19**

- The theme of the “2020 Biennial Sustainable Development Report” is “Ensuring Pacific People’s well-being through the Blue Pacific identity, the proposed 2050 Strategy and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. It recognises the centrality of our Leader’s vision of “a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity so that all Pacific people can lead-free healthy and productive lives.”

- The COVID-19 pandemic is causing unprecedented disruption in the Pacific and will likely undo the hard-won gains we have achieved to 2020. As the World Health Organisation scaled up their alerts on the pandemic earlier this year, Pacific leaders and Governments acted quickly. They formed a regional task force and took decisive action to limit our exposure to the virus, avoiding community outbreaks and the increased burden on our health systems.

- Their robust and timely public health and border protection measures have so far, protected the region from a public health catastrophe, assisted by regional platforms such as the Pacific
Humanitarian Pathway – COVID 19 (PHP-C). The humanitarian Pathway is the first of its kind globally assisting preparedness and response efforts across our vast Ocean region.

- However, COVID-19 has exacerbated the persistent vulnerabilities, social inequalities and dependencies that continue to impede our development.
- Regional responses on the economic and social impacts of COVID–19 are underway that will provide policy options for our Leaders.

- Indeed, we as a region we must work together to accelerate progress in several goals such as quality education—goal four, climate action—Goal 13, Goal 15, -- life on land, and of course the Ocean SDG, Goal 14, life below water.

- The development of the 2050 Strategy will posture our region well beyond the SDG’s and hopes to strengthen and complement the journey to inclusive growth. The ultimate objective is to ensure the well-being of all people of the Pacific, leaving no one behind.

**Refined and coordinated service delivery**

- The challenges that we face today demand us to work together better and in a more efficient manner to deliver for our Pacific
people. Coordination has always been a critical challenge of ours, in particular for implementing and advisory agencies.

- Our most vulnerable are most at risk of bearing the brunt of any adversity across our societies. The voluntary national reviews show us our strengths, and also where we need to work together as one community. We need to be efficient in how we rise to our challenges and move beyond change.

Conclusion

- Ensuring progress in achieving the SDGs will be significantly enhanced by making sure that lessons are shared, and best practices replicated. Our Blue Pacific continent has at its core the protection and sustainability of people’s well-being. We believe that everyone everywhere, regardless of geography, sex, age, culture, religion, income or political beliefs, must have access to the goods and services required to live well.

- We owe it to our children to implement measures today, that lead to a better tomorrow.

- I wish you all a successful Forum.

- I thank you.